

Message Text

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47

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-10 CU-02 HEW-02 AID-05 IGA-01

OMB-01 SP-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01

USIA-06 PRS-01 L-03 /060 W
----- 030297

P 061432Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY MBABANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8754

INFO AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

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LONDON FOR SANDBERG (PASS WARD)

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAID, SEDU, PFOR, BC, LT, WZ

SUBJECT: UBLS - WHAT NEXT?

REF: MASERU 1147, GABORONE 1452, GABORONE 1494, STATE 254211,
LONDON 16966, MBABANE 1797

1. GOS MINISTER OF FINANCE ROBERT STEPHENS ASKED CHARGE TO CALL ON HIM NOVEMBER 6 TO DISCUSS SWAZI POSITION ON UBLS CRISIS. (STEPHENS MADE SIMILAR PRESENTATION TO UK AMBASSADOR LAST WEEK.) STEPHENS REVIEWED RECENT EVENTS DESCRIBED REFTELS AND PREVIOUS, EMPHASIZING GOS VIEW THAT ALTHOUGH GOL HAD USED THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE EXTENSION OF VC ROGERS' CONTRACT AS THE EXCUSE TO BREAK UP THE UNIVERSITY, GOL'S REAL REASON FOR DOING SO WAS ITS BASIC OPPOSITION TO DEVOLUTION. STEPHENS SAID THAT GOL HAD NEVER AGREED TO EXTENSION OF ROGERS FOR ONE YEAR AS A COMPROMISE SOLUTION AND IT WAS GOL'S DECISION TO CANCEL ROGERS' RESIDENCE PERMIT IN LESOTHO WHICH HAD PRECIPITATED THE SERIES OF EVENTS WHICH LED TO GOL NATIONALIZATION OF ROMA CAMPUS. (THIS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CONFLICTS WITH REPORT FROM MASERU THAT UNDP RESREP KABBAH

PERSUADED GOL TO RESCIND ITS INTERDICT AND LET ROGERS REMAIN AS VC UNTIL JANUARY, 1976, PROVIDED THAT HE LEAVE UBLs AT THAT TIME (SEE PARA 4, MASERU 1039, AND MBABANE 1735)).

2. ON FINANCIAL SIDE, STEPHENS SAID THAT R400,000 BELONGING TO UBLs IS NOW FROZEN IN BARCLAYS BANK IN LESOTHO BY ACTION OF GOL. IT HAD COST GOS APPROXIMATELY R14,000 PER GRADUATE TO EDUCATE STUDENTS AT UBLs; LESOTHO'S WITHDRAWAL WOULD OBVIOUSLY MAKE THE UNIVERSITY EVEN MORE EXPENSIVE. AT THE MOMENT, BOTSWANA AND SWAZILAND WERE DETERMINED TO COOPERATE AS CLOSELY AS POSSIBLE TO INCREASE EFFICIENCY AND HOLD DOWN COSTS OF A JOINT UNIVERSITY. BOTH GOVERNMENTS WERE STUDYING THE SITUATION AND WOULD BE APPROACHING DONORS WHEN THEY HAD A CLEARER IDEA OF WHERE THEY WANTED TO GO.

3. IN RESPONSE TO CHARGE'S QUESTION, STEPHENS SAID HE SAW NO FUTURE ROLE FOR V.C. ROGERS IN A JOINT SWAZI-BOTSWANA UNIVERSITY. HE THOUGHT THE PRESENT PVC'S ON EACH CAMPUS WOULD CONTINUE IN OFFICE AND ROGERS WOULD PROBABLY DEPART BEFORE THE END OF THE CURRENT ACADEMIC YEAR.

4. ON NOVEMBER 5, OSARAC ALSO RECEIVED TELEGRAM FROM ROGERS (SAME TEXT AS TRANSMITTED GABORONE 1503) ADDRESSED TO RDO WARD. GOS ATTORNEY GENERAL COHEN (WHO DID NOT SEE THIS TELEGRAM BEFORE IT WAS SENT) WAS PUZZLED BY USE OF PHRASE "LINEAL DESCENDANT." IN GOS VIEW, UBLs CONTINUES TO EXIST AS A LEGAL ENTITY EVEN THOUGH ONE PARTNER HAS OPTED OUT.

5. COMMENT: DESPITE CONFLICTING STORIES BEING TOLD IN MBABANE, MASERU, GABORONE, LONDON AND WASHINGTON, A FEW GENERALLY AGREED POINTS HAVE EMERGED:

A. ALTHOUGH GOL KNEW AS EARLY AS APRIL, 1974, THAT UNIVERSITY COUNCIL INTENDED TO RENEW ROGERS' CONTRACT FOR FOUR YEARS, IT DID NOT OFFICIALLY OPPOSE THIS MOVE IN COUNCIL UNTIL JULY, 1975. ON THE OTHER HAND, GOL NEVER FORMALLY AGREED. NEITHER GOB NOR GOS IS WILDLY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT ROGERS, BUT NEITHER WAS PREPARED TO SEE HIM DISMISSED WITH ONE MONTH'S NOTICE (AND NO REPLACEMENT IN SIGHT) AFTER HIS CONTRACT HAD BEEN OFFICIALLY RENEWED BY THE UNIVERSITY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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COUNCIL.

B. THE DECISION BY THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL, BACKED BY BOTSWANA AND SWAZILAND, TO CONTEST THE GOL INTERDICT AGAINST ROGERS PRECIPITATED THE CRISIS. IF COOLER HEADS HAD PREVAILED AND THE TWO SIDES HAD TRIED TO SETTLE THE MATTER OUT OF COURT, LESOTHO MIGHT STILL BE A PART OF UBLs.

6. RE PARA 3 ABOVE, WE HAVE NO INFORMATION THAT ROGERS IS
PLANNING TO RESIGN.

7. ON OCTOBER 30, GOS PERM SEC FOR EDUCATION SHOWED OSARAC OFFICER
TELEX FROM GOL REQUESTING MEETING OF BLS MINISTERS OF EDUCATION
TO DISCUSS SCHOOL EXAMINATIONS AND OTHER ACADEMIC UNDERTAKINGS.
THIS SUGGESTS THAT SOME FORM OF COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF
HIGHER EDUCATION BETWEEN THE THREE COUNTRIES MAY STILL BE POSSIBLE,
ONCE TEMPERS HAVE COOLED.
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